



Does infant feeding method impact maternal mental health?

The Challenge

Exploring the effects of breastfeeding on hospital admissions for postpartum mental disorders. Breastfeeding has been reported to reduce the risk of postpartum anxiety and depression. The aim of this study was to explore the connection between early breastfeeding experience and clinical-diagnosed postpartum mental disorders and examine the associations between early breastfeeding experience and the interval between birth and the first-time hospital admission for mental disorders.

How the PHRN Infrastructure Helped

The Centre for Health Record Linkage (CHeReL) linked records from the NSW Midwives Data Collection (MDC) and the NSW Admitted Patients Data Collection (APDC). The MDC covered all births in public and private hospitals as well as home births in NSW. The study included all mothers who gave birth to a live infant between 2007 and 2008 in New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

The Result

This study demonstrates that breastfeeding is associated with a decrease in the risk of subsequent maternal hospital admissions for schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders and mental illness due to substance use, in the first postpartum year. The study highlights the protective effect of breastfeeding on postpartum maternal mental health and an effect of early breastfeeding experience on maternal mental health outcomes. Additionally, this study concluded that if confirmed these results have the potential of improving the health of mothers and reduce health service costs.

Reference

Xu, Fenglian & Li, Zhuoyang & Binns, Colin & Bonello, Michelle & Austin, Marie-Paule & Sullivan, Elizabeth. (2014). Does Infant Feeding Method Impact on Maternal Mental Health?. *Breastfeeding medicine : the official journal of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine*. 9. . 10.1089/bfm.2013.0142.



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